

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
TRSE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03
XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 STR-07 CEA-01 OES-07
DLOS-09 MCT-01 CU-04 /132 W
-----027392 242243Z /72

P R 242120Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6544
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA POUCH
AMCONSUL CALI POUCH
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN POUCH

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PBOR, ECON, PINS, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. JULIO CESAR TURBAY APPEARS TO HAVE THE EDGE IN THE FEBRUARY 26 ELECTION WHICH WILL ALSO DETERMINE THE LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. A GENERALLY ORDERLY AND PEACEFUL ELECTION IS EXPECTED. COLOMBIA AND HAITI SIGNED AN AGREEMENT THAT DELIMITS THEIR MARITIME BOUNDARY. THE UN LATIN AMERICAN GROUP NOMINATED FOREIGN MINISTER INDALECIO LIEVANO AGUIRRE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE NEXT SESSION OF THE UNGA. THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDUSTRIALISTS (ANDI) AND THE COLOMBIAN INSTITUTE ON FOREIGN TRADE (INCOMEX) CONTINUED TO DISPUTE TRADE BALANCE FIGURES WITH THE US. POLITICALLY RELATED VIOLENCE CONTINUED AT A MODERATE LEVEL. END SUMMARY.

2. COLOMBIANS GO TO THE POLLS. THE FEBRUARY 26 CONGRESSIONAL

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AND LOCAL ELECTIONS WILL ALSO DETERMINE WHETHER CARLOS LLERAS OR JULIO CESAR TURBAY WILL BE THE LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ON JUNE 4. TURBAY WILL PROBABLY WIN BY A MARGIN OF 100-200,000 VOTES OVER LLERAS. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY HAS ALREADY CHOSEN A STRONG CANDIDATE, BELIASRIO BETANCUR, WHO HAS A PROGRESSIVE IMAGE. AS IS CUSTOMARY, SECURITY FORCES WILL BE DEPLOYED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THERE IS LITTLE

LIKELIHOOD OF SIGNIFICANT VIOLENCE ON ELECTION DAY (BOGOTA 1760).

3. COLOMBIA DEFINES MARITIME LIMITS WITH HAITI. COLOMBIA AND HAITI DEFINED THEIR MUTUAL MARINE BOUNDARY IN AN ACCORD SIGNED IN PORT AU PRINCE. THE DELIMITATION OF COLOMBIA'S MARITIME AREAS HAS BEEN A PRIORITY CONCERN OF THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION. FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCES DO NOT ANTICIPATE, HOWEVER, THAT SIMILAR AGREEMENTS WITH NICARAGUA AND VENEZUELA WILL BE REACHED UNDER THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT. AN UNOFFICIAL COPY OF THE HAITIAN AGREEMENT IS BEING POUCHED TO ARA/AND/CO.

4. FOREIGN MINISTER NOMINATED FOR PRESIDENCY OF UNGA. FOREIGN MINISTER INDALECIO LIEVANO AGUIRRE WAS NOMINATED AS THE LATIN AMERICAN GROUP'S CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT OF THE 33RD SESSION OF THE UNGA. HIS ELECTION IS CONSIDERED ASSURED BECAUSE OF THE TRADITIONAL ROTATIONAL SYSTEM; IT IS LATIN AMERICA'S TURN. THE GOC HAS GENERALLY FOLLOWED A POLICY OF CAREFUL NEUTRALITY ON ISSUES INVOLVING THE THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES AND ANTICIPATES THE SUPPORT OF THESE COUNTRIES FOR LIEVANO'S ELECTION. THE COLOMBIANS FELT THAT THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FAVORING LIEVANO'S NOMINATION SINCE THEY BELIEVED THAT HIS CHIEF RIVAL, COSTA RICA'S GONZALO FACIO, WOULD HAVE FACED OPPOSITION BECAUSE OF COSTA RICA'S STRONG SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL. LIEVANO WILL BE THE SECOND COLOMBIAN TO HOLD PRESIDENCY. HIS NOMINATION WAS GREETED BY FAVORABLE PRESS COMMENTARY. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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5. BATTLE OR WORDS ON US-COLOMBIAN TRADE CONTINUES. COLOMBIAN PRESS ARTICLES CONTINUED TO GIVE PLAY TO TRADE PROBLEMS WITH THE US, HIGHLIGHTING DIFFERENCES IN TRADE DATA. THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF INDUSTRIALISTS (ANDI) AND THE COLOMBIAN INSTITUTE ON FOREIGN TRADE (INCOMEX) CONTINUED TO CITE DATA BASED ON INCOMEX-APPROVED REGISTRATIONS. THEIR TRADE BALANCE DATA DIFFERS FROM THAT OF THE USDOC BY 190 MILLION DOLLARS FOR 1976 AND 300 MILLION DOLLARS FOR 1977. IN BOTH YEARS THE COLOMBIAN DATA REFLECT HEAVY TRADE DEFICITS WITH THE US OF APPROXIMATELY 250 MILLION DOLLARS. THE EMBASSY HAS REQUESTED MORE DETAILED US TRADE DATA AND, UPON RECEIPT, WILL USE THEM IN DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOC. THE PRESS ARTICLES ALSO DISCUSSED THE COUNTERVAILING DUTY ISSUE RELATING TO LEATHER BAGS AND TEXTILES, MENTIONING IN THE LATTER CASE THAT EXPORTS TO THE US FELL BY 30 PER CENT FOR THE PERIOD OF JULY 1976 TO JUNE 1977 COMPARED TO THE PRIOR TWELVE MONTH PERIOD.

6. PUBLIC ORDER. POLITICALLY RELATED VIOLENCE CONTINUED AT A MODERATE LEVEL BY COLOMBIAN STANDARDS. AN URBAN COMMAND OF THE CHINESE-LINE EPL TOOK OVER A TELEPHONE COMPANY EXCHANGE IN CALI, CUT MOST OF THE TELEPHONE WIRES AND PAINTED REVOLUTIONARY SLOGANS ON THE WALLS. M-19 TERRORISTS ASSAULTED A POLICE STATION

IN BUCARAMANGA, KILLING ONE POLICEMAN AND SEIZING SEVERAL WEAPONS.
IN THE TOWN OF YUMBO IN EL VALLE, UNIDENTIFIED TERRORIST

BOMBED THE LOCAL OFFICES OF THE LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE
PARTIES, IN APPARENT IMITATION OF THE BOMBING THE PREVIOUS WEEK
IN BOGOTA OF THE CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS OF THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES.
(BOGOTA 1601). INHONDA, TOLIMA DEPARTMENT, UNIDENTIFIED INDIV-
IDUALS THREW EXPLOSIVE DEVICES AT THE HOME OF THE MAYOR, CAUSING
EXTENSIVE PROPERTY DAMAGE BUT NO INJURIES; ONE OF THE TER-
RORISTS WAS LATER KILLED IN A SHOOT-OUT WITH THE POLICE. A
SERIES OF CLASHES BETWEEN POLICE AND STUDENT DEMONSTRATORS IN
MEDELLIN AND CALI LED TO SEVERAL INJURIES AND HUNDREDS OF AR-
RESTS. TWO PROMINENT KIDNAP VICTIMS WERE RELEASED: AN
ITALIAN BUSINESSMAN KIDNAPPED ON 18 FEBRUARY WAS FREED THREE
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DAYS LATER BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SECURITY'S (DAS) ANTI-KIDNAP-
PING SQUAD AND THREE MEMBERS OF THE KIDNAPPING RING WERE
ARRESTED; AND THE WIFE OF A BOGOTA BUSINESSMAN, KIDNAPPED
BEFORE CHRISTMAS, WAS RELEASED AFTER THE PAYMENT BY HER FAMILY
OF A LARGE RANSOM.
ASENCIO

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